

Nicholson does not disclose or suggest a hollow portion that extends up to a position substantially near an end surface of the outer cylinder member. As shown in Figs. 1, 3, and 4, Nicholson's cutouts are positioned at a middle position between the tube 10 and the sleeve 11.

Furthermore, Nicholson does not disclose or suggest a hollow portion that surrounds a block portion on a radial outer peripheral surface and a circumferential side surface thereof. Nicholson's cutout is not positioned near the ridge 13, which the Examiner contends is a block portion. Since Nicholson's cutout is not positioned near the ridge 13, it also does not surround the ridge 13 at a radial outer peripheral surface or a circumferential side surface thereof. Therefore, Nicholson's bushing does not provide the advantages of the present invention, such as increasing the ratio of the elasticity of the bushing in the axial direction to the elasticity in a direction perpendicular to the axial direction.

Furthermore, Nicholson does not disclose a connection portion "positioned between a bottom of the hollow portion and the end face of the rubber elastic body on the side of the flange portion, for connecting the non-deforming rubber portion and an inner peripheral surface of an end portion of the outer cylinder member," as set forth in claim 1. The feature of Nicholson's bushing that the Examiner has identified as a "connecting portion" on the marked-up version of Fig. 1 on page 4 of the January 14, 2005 Office Action is not positioned between a bottom of the Nicholson's hollow portion and the end face of the rubber elastic body on the side of the flange portion. The identified feature is located at an opposite end of Nicholson's bushing from the hollow portion identified by the Examiner and therefore cannot be construed as being positioned between "a bottom of the hollow portion and the end face of the rubber elastic body on the side of the flange portion," as set forth in the claims.

Thus, Nicholson fails to teach or suggest all of the features of the present invention as set forth in claim 1. Claims 2 and 3 are dependent on claim 1 and are therefore also patentable for at least the same reasons. Based on the foregoing, the rejection of claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) should be withdrawn, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

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Respectfully submitted,

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